

# With 954 hectares, MP leads in tree plantation under 'green credit' plan

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NEW DELHI: Madhya Pradesh has taken lead in implementing the Centre's Green Credit Programme (GCP) which got over 500 land parcels spanning 4,980 hectares across 10 states approved for tree plantation in the past two months. These states, along with three others, have together identified more than 10,000 hectares of land for the programme.

Madhya Pradesh has, so far, reported the highest 954 hectares of approved degraded forest land for plantation/greening exercises followed by Telangana (845 hectares), Chhattisgarh (713 hectares), Gujarat (595 hectares) and Assam (454 hectares).

Other five states where such land parcels have been approved by the administrator - Indian Council of Forestry Research and

Education (ICFRE) - are Bihar, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Odisha.

As many as 14 public sector undertaking (PSUs) and other entities have been registered to do plantations on degraded forest land and eventually earn green credits. Individuals, industries and other public/private entities, including philanthropies and local bodies, can voluntarily participate in the GCP. Underlining how the programme will nurture the entire ecosystem services, Union environment secretary Leena Nandan said, "GCP is envisaged independent of the carbon credit mechanism, as it intends to encourage other non-carbon environmental positive actions for benefits to local soil, water and ecosystems, and does not encompass only the carbon sequestration aspect of the areas where greening has successfully been carried out."

Though the programme was launched six months ago to encourage environmentally friendly practices by people, the environment ministry notified the methodologies for calculation of credit generated in lieu of tree plantation on degraded land parcels, including scrub land, wasteland and catchment areas of rivers in every state and Union Territory in Feb.

"Based on the biodiversity of each degraded forest land block, tree species will be selected based on discussion with the relevant forest department, the entity which has selected the land and the ICFRE. Tree species selection will be strictly site relevant and such as to encourage assisted natural regeneration and indigenous species," Nandan told TOI.

States have identified the land parcels for plantation amid certain concerns expressed by experts over implementation of GCP. "In my view decision to hand over degraded forest land for plantation activity to any private company is fraught with legal complications and may become a source of conflict between tribals communities and forest departments," said S S Badhawan, retired Indian Forest Service officer and former principal chief conservator of forest, Jharkhand.

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